

## HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING – February 23, 2010

### Testimony presented by United Way of Connecticut on S.B. 32 and HUSKY Infoline

My name is Richard Porth and I serve as CEO of United Way of Connecticut. Tanya Barrett, UWC's Vice President for 2-1-1 Health and Human Services, is joining me to present this testimony.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S.B. 32 An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Social Services and on HUSKY Infoline.

- Section 55(a) of the S.B. 32 calls for 2-1-1 Infoline, a service of UWC, to help develop mechanisms to increase outreach and maximize enrollment of eligible children and adults in HUSKY. UWC has been proud to do this work and other care coordination and advocacy work for HUSKY clients since 1998 through our HUSKY Infoline, a specialized unit within 2-1-1. And, we request that funding be restored for HUSKY Infoline in the FY10-11 budget to the current level of \$671,000 so that we can continue to provide these valuable services.
- Based on the message in the Governor's midterm budget adjustments that explain the rationale for eliminating HUSKY Infoline funding, it appears that there was an assumption that HUSKY Infoline did only information and referral work. But, HUSKY Infoline's work goes far beyond information and referral. About half of our work is care coordination: a) we advocate for Connecticut residents to get the health care they need, and b) we help Connecticut residents navigate HUSKY's complicated benefit and eligibility requirements and navigate across the separate pieces of HUSKY (enrollment, eligibility, carve outs for dental, and RX, and so on).
- Last year, HUSKY Infoline received 60,699 incoming calls and made 44,740 outbound calls on behalf of more than 50,000 Connecticut families and individuals.
- HUSKY Infoline is the "go-to" place for HUSKY clients when they run into problems getting health care. Five of the most common requests for help are:
  - "I need help with my medical bill."
  - "I need help finding a dentist."
  - "How do I get expedited for a child or a pregnant woman?"
  - "I cannot get my child's prescription at the pharmacy."
  - "How do I find a doctor that accepts my insurance?"

→ HUSKY Infoline has played an increasingly important role helping the state and HUSKY clients when new eligibility and benefit changes are made. This is especially important lately with all the HUSKY changes brought on by the state's budget problems. Recent examples of HUSKY Infoline responding quickly and nimbly to help the state and HUSKY clients are:

- July 2005 – Citizenship/ID
- March 2008 – MCO Transition
- February 2009 – Anthem/Blue Care Termination

→ The plan to replace HUSKY Infoline relies on DSS staff and 2-1-1, both of which are already stretched thin with current work volumes. It also assumes that the HUSKY Infoline's care coordination and advocacy work on behalf of HUSKY clients will be performed in large measure by administrative service organizations. But negotiations for this new work are not complete and it is as yet unclear whether these organizations can do the work as cost-effectively as HUSKY Infoline or with the same level of service and attention to HUSKY clients and Connecticut residents. Finally, the plan to replace HUSKY Infoline also relies on other entities such as health centers and community action agencies, which already help in this work; but, as important as their work is, it is not delivered on a unified statewide basis, as is currently the case with HUSKY Infoline.

→ We respectfully request that the legislature restore \$671,000 in the state's FY10-11 budget to support HUSKY Infoline's vital services to the people across the state.

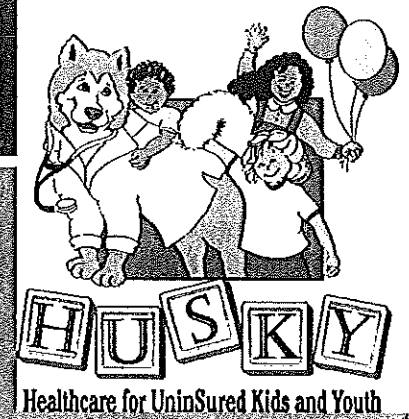
→ We'd also like to take this opportunity to support Senate Bill 139, An Act Concerning Independent Monitoring of the HUSKY Program. This is important independent work that has helped to strengthen HUSKY since the inception of Medicaid managed care, and it should be formally authorized in state statute with appropriate funding.

Thank you.

Attachment – HUSKY Infoline Flyer

United Way of Connecticut

# HUSKY Infoline



## WHO WE ARE...

HUSKY Infoline (HIL) is a specialized unit of the United Way of Connecticut/2-1-1 Infoline system that has served over 1.2 million Connecticut residents since its inception in 1998. Connecticut residents who dial 877-CT-HUSKY or 2-1-1 reach knowledgeable, multilingual, telephone care coordinators ready to advocate for access to healthcare and answer questions on navigating through the HUSKY program.

## WHAT WE DO...

- **Information and Assistance** – provide information about the HUSKY application process, eligibility guidelines, and mail HUSKY application packages
- **Care Coordination** - advocate for enrolled families who need assistance obtaining healthcare services
- **Eligibility and Enrollment** – assist callers who are having difficulties obtaining and maintaining HUSKY coverage
- **Training** – distribute HUSKY materials and train professionals at events throughout Connecticut
- **Reporting** – report to DSS on barriers experienced by callers in enrolling and/or accessing services as well as program trends

	FY08	FY09	% Change
Information and Assistance	23,356	36,571	+56.5%
Care Coordination (HUSKY A)	26,053	24,075	-7.6%
Care Coordination (HUSKY B)	2,302	2,987	+29.8%
Eligibility and Enrollment	1,389	2,567	+85.8%
Total	53,100	66,200	+24.7%

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

The Governor's proposed budget cuts for FY 2011 suspends funding for HUSKY Infoline as of July 1, 2010. The elimination of HUSKY Infoline will result in:

- Increased burden on already stretched DSS regional staff
- Additional call volume at the DSS regional offices for inquiries related to status of applications and coverage
- Longer interruption of medical benefits for families
- Decrease in families ability to obtain healthcare services for their children, potentially resulting in less access to preventive care and more Emergency Department utilization
- Recent research estimates that the cost associated with each child who disenrolls from Medicaid or SCHIP is \$2,121 per year due to ER use for non-urgent conditions. In FY 2009, HIL assisted 525 children get re-enrolled in HUSKY after losing coverage, potentially saving the state over \$1.1 million.

## STATEWIDE CALL CENTER STATISTICS

Between July 1, 2008 and June 31, 2009, HUSKY Infoline handled more than 105,000 calls and helped resolve more than 52,000 cases.

Five common requests for help	FY08	FY09	% Change
I need help with my medical bill.	1,285	1,916	+49%
I need assistance finding a dentist.	1,777	2,502	+41%
How do I get expedited coverage for a child or a pregnant woman?	1,395	1,634	+17%
I cannot get my child's prescription at the pharmacy.	1,621*	725	-55%
How do I find a doctor that accepts my insurance?	1,131	2,005	+77.3%

\* Represents volume during pharmacy carve-out period.

### PROGRAM CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION:

DSS has relied on HUSKY Infoline to assist with the implementation of frequent program changes over last several years.

Program Change	HUSKY Infoline Response
July 2005: The federal Deficit Reduction Act requires US Citizens applying for Medicaid to provide proof of citizenship and identity.	Made 4,213 outbound calls to HUSKY families in jeopardy of losing coverage due to failure to provide proof of citizenship.
February 2008: Pharmacy benefits are administered directly through DSS instead of the managed care plans. Clients now need CONNECT cards to access pharmacy services.	Generated CONNECT cards for almost 11,000 HUSKY A and SAGA members.
March 2008: The MCO transtion begins. Wellcare and Health Net no longer participate in the HUSKY program.	Handled 21,483 calls related to the managed care plan transition.
April 2008: HUSKY A memebers whose managed care plan has left the program are enrolled in Traditional Medicaid.	Provided member service assistance to 3,587 HUSKY families enrolled in Traditional Medicaid who called HIL.
September 2009: Dental benefits are administered by DSS through an administrative services organization.	Educated 1,003 members about both the dental and pharmacy carve-outs.
February 2009: Anthem/BlueCare Family Plan terminates relationship with the HUSKY program.	HUSKY Infoline made 19,000 after-hours calls to HUSKY members to facilitate plan changes to the remaining health plans.
July 2010: ??	??

### Call EXAMPLES

A woman from Vernon called HIL when she was unable to fill a prescription at her local pharmacy. When the HIL Care Coordinator (CC) called the pharmacist, she learned that the pharmacy no longer filled this type of complex, compound prescriptions. The HIL CC called numerous statewide pharmacies, including several mail order pharmacies that also were no longer filling this type of compound prescription. After many calls over a 30 day period, with the collaboration of the DSS pharmacy policy unit, the HIL CC was able to work with a pharmacy that agreed to make the prescription. Upon following up with the client, the HIL CC confirmed that the client was able to get her prescription after being without it for several weeks.

Actual testimonial from a woman from Stratford who called HIL to let us know that, "...Renee and all the girls [at HIL] are absolutely wonderful. [My daughter] came off the coverage because she turned 18 and she wasn't in school. Renee and folks at HIL were able to get the worker to reactivate the insurance without my daughter having to reapply for the insurance. I tried to correct the situation on my own but I couldn't seem to get anywhere. Renee was able to get her back on the insurance within a couple of days. I couldn't have done it without her. Thanks again for all your help."